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Briefs

James Earl Ray still in coma

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - Family members hope James Earl Ray can survive long enough for a hearing they hope will finally start the process of clearing him in the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ray, who confessed to the 1968 shooting death of the civil rights leader and has been trying to recant ever since, remained in a coma in critical condition Wednesday, said Freda Herndon, a spokeswoman for Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital.

Ray, 68, is suffering from liver and kidney damage.

Jerry Ray said Wednesday from he would authorize putting his brother on life-support equipment if necessary. On Tuesday, he said he would refuse such a measure.

"The Reverend James Lawson called me from California yesterday," Jerry Ray said. "James' attorney William Pepper called, too, and they convinced me that we had a good chance at a hearing in Memphis on February 20th to clear his name after all these years."